TYNION >>> SIMMONDS >>> BIDIKAR

issue 01

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

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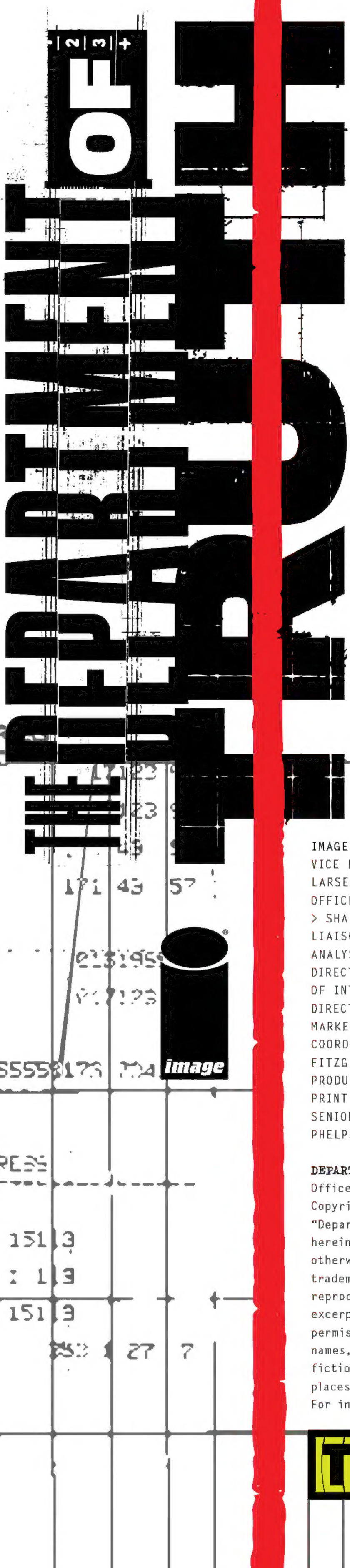

WRITER: >>>>>>

~~JAMES TYNION IV~~

ARTIST: >>>>>>

~~MARTIN SIMMONDS~~

LETTERER: >>>>>>

~~ADITYA BIDIKAR~~

DESIGNER: >>>>>>

~~DYLAN TODD~~

EDITOR: >>>>>>

~~STEVE FOXE~~

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TINYONION TINYONIONSTUDIOS.COM

DALLAS, TX.
November 22, 1963.
7:55 p.m.

I'D LIKE SOME LEGAL REPRESENTATION. THESE POLICE OFFICERS HAVE NOT ALLOWED ME TO HAVE ANY...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?

I **WORK** IN THAT BUILDING.

WERE YOU IN THE BUILDING AT THAT TIME?

NATURALLY, IF I WORK IN THAT BUILDING. YES, SIR.

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?

THEY'RE TAKING ME IN BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT I LIVED IN THE SOVIET UNION.

I'M JUST A **PATSY!**

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?!

WE'RE GOING TO NEED THE ROOM.

HIT ME IN THE--

LEE.

LEE. NOBODY IS LISTENING.

THAT WASN'T A REQUEST.

I'M NOT... I'M NOT THE PERSON THEY ALL **THINK** I AM! I'M NOT THIS--

IT'S JUST US IN THIS ROOM.

I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD REALLY HAPPEN.

NONE OF THAT MATTERS ANYMORE.

...

WHAT DO **THEY** BELIEVE JUST HAPPENED? WHAT DO THE PEOPLE THINK--

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO SETTLE.

SOMETHING THIS BIG. THIS MOMENT IS GOING TO HAVE CONSEQUENCES. THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE.

THIS WORLD IS GOING TO **CHANGE.**

CAN'T FUCKING REMEMBER WHAT REALLY HAPPENED... IS THAT...IS IT HAPPENING TO ME? I'M A PART OF IT NOW, AREN'T I?

YES.

I WAS SENT HERE TO TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.

AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO TRY AND MAKE SURE EVERYBODY ELSE UNDERSTANDS THAT, TOO. DO YOU FOLLOW?

YES.

SHIT. YES. I UNDERSTAND.

GOOD. NOW SAY IT. SAY IT SO I KNOW YOU STILL REMEMBER.

SAY IT SO I KNOW YOU KNOW THE **TRUTH.**

UP IS DOWN AND DOWN IS UP.

CHAPTER ONE:
The End of the World

YOU GOING TO THROW UP?

NO.

MAYBE.

DON'T THROW UP.

OKAY.

ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME, TOO?

JUST DON'T THROW UP. THE LAST CAR THEY GAVE ME WAS SHIT. I LIKE THIS CAR.

OKAY.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
Present Day.

ARE YOU--?

DID YOU SEE IT, TOO? DID YOU SEE IT, OR AM I JUST COMPLETELY LOSING MY MIND?

YEAH, OKAY. YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.

IF YOU KEEP ASKING QUESTIONS, YEAH. PROBABLY.

TELL ME YOUR NAME, KID.

COLE. I'M COLE.

DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE?

I'M HERE... BECAUSE I SAW SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT CAN'T POSSIBLY EXIST. AND NOW I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.

HAH.

HE'S FUNNY.

HE'S NOT JOKING.

I KNOW. I DIDN'T MEAN HE WAS ACTUALLY FUNNY.

FBI.

YES, SIR.

QUANTICO. YOU'RE A TEACHER.

I...I'VE DONE SOME FIELDWORK.

BUT YOU'RE A TEACHER. YOU TEACH ABOUT FUNNY PICTURES ON THE INTERNET.

I, *UH*...I LOOK INTO THE SORTS OF DISCUSSIONS THAT HAPPEN AMONG RIGHT-WING WHITE NATIONALISTS IN THEIR ONLINE COMMUNITIES.

FUNNY PICTURES. THEY SHARE FUNNY PICTURES.

THEY AREN'T FUNNY. THEY'RE TYPICALLY NOT THAT ORIGINAL, AND... WELL. THEY'RE VERY RACIST.

THEY THINK THEY'RE FUNNY, I MEAN.

YEAH. I GUESS... YEAH.

AND THEN THERE'S THE CONSPIRACY THEORY STUFF.

UH... WELL, YES.

TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

I...I DON'T KNOW...

SON. YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO GET OVER WHETHER OR NOT WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU. I JUST WANT YOU TO FUCKING **TALK** TO US.

THEIR *ERR*...PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD. THEIR BELIEF THAT THE SYSTEM IS STACKED AGAINST THEM IN DELIBERATE WAYS. IT MAKES THEM... WELL, SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE.

WHAT DO YOUR LITTLE MESSAGE BOARDS HAVE TO DO WITH CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN STUDYING. THEIR... SUSCEPTIBILITY.

AND THAT'S HOW YOU GOT TO THE FLAT EARTH CONFERENCE.

YES.

SIR, I WAS DRINKING OVER THE WEEKEND. AND I HAVEN'T SLEPT-- **REALLY** SLEPT-- IN ABOUT THREE DAYS.

START AT THE BEGINNING.

NONE OF THIS...THE SORT OF THINGS I THINK I SAW...

I DO NOT TRUST MY MEMORIES, AND I DON'T SEE ANY REASON YOU SHOULD EITHER.

GOOD. THAT'S A VERY SENSIBLE ATTITUDE.

NOW TELL ME WHAT YOU SAW.

I remember walking into the hotel conference area and thinking that I had never seen so many polo shirts in my life.

Your mailman. Your accountant. The guy who scans your plane ticket at the airport. They were mostly, but not exclusively, men. Mostly, but not exclusively, white.

Just ordinary, boring people. Making jokes about the latest episode of a network TV show, or quoting an old *Family Guy*.

That's what struck me the most. You'd never pick them out in a crowd. They were anybody and everybody and nobody.

And they all had this grin on their face. A grin that said they knew a secret truth about this world. Something nobody else knew.

They believed the earth was flat.

That all scientific research to the contrary is a conspiracy to make us docile, so the government can feed us the facts they want us believe.

THE FLAT EARTH SOCIETY

ANNUAL GATHERING

Well, some believe it's the government, some believe it's the church, and some have more...colorful suggestions.

FLAT EARTH AND THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION

They buy maps and models of the world for their homes and offices, to hang up next to their signed comic books and movie posters.

They listen to self-taught basement physicists twist scientific theory to their cause.

And then they drink at the hotel bar, and have the sort of excited arguments where they egg each other on, convinced they're going to get closer to the truth tomorrow.

WHY DO YOU THINK THEY BELIEVE?

IT'S...IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT CONTROL. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

IT'S A DESIRE TO REJECT THE ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT FEEL TOO COMPLICATED AND TOO ABSTRACT, AND BUILD A MORE COMFORTABLE REALITY THAT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND.

AND MORE THAN THAT...IT'S A SENSE...THAT IF THEY'RE RIGHT, AND THEY'RE ONTO THE TRUTH THAT'S BEEN KEPT SECRET ALL THIS TIME...

WELL, THEN THEY'RE HEROES, AREN'T THEY?

STANDING UP AGAINST THE AUTHORITY THAT'S TRYING TO KEEP THEM AND THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY DOWN.

THEY WANT REALITY TO MAKE SENSE IN A WAY THAT MAKES THEM IMPORTANT, AND SPECIAL.

EVERYONE WANTS TO FEEL LIKE THAT, RIGHT?

HEH.

WHAT?

TELL ME WHEN IT WENT SIDEWAYS.

YOU'RE COLE TURNER.

I, UH...YES.

SPECIAL AGENT COLE TURNER.

YES.

WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME?

I...I DON'T THINK...I SHOULD?

I HAVE... I'M MARRIED. I HAVE A HUSBAND AT HOME...I'M JUST...GOING TO BED?

YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME.

THIS IS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS. THE MOMENTS THAT CHANGE YOUR LIFE. THE MOMENTS THAT CHANGE EVERY-THING?

DON'T YOU WANT THAT?

-GULP-

AH, MR. TURNER.

HE CAME. MARVELOUS, HE CAME. THANK YOU, SEBASTIAN.

OF COURSE. I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT.

NICE MEETING YOU.

UH, YEAH.

YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE?

KENNETH AND BERTRAM BOULET.

I LOVE WHEN THEY KNOW WHO WE ARE. DON'T YOU, BERTIE?

YOU WERE AT OUR LITTLE CARNIVAL TODAY, WEREN'T YOU? WALKING AROUND WITH THE LITTLE PEOPLE.

YES, SIR.

KEN. PLEASE.

IT'S MARVELOUS. THERE'S MORE EACH YEAR. THAT'S WHAT MAKES THIS ALL POSSIBLE.

THAT AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

LIKE ME?

WE HAVE MANY FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON, YOUNG MAN. EVEN IF THEY DON'T SEE EYE TO EYE, THEY HELP US MAKE ALL THIS POSSIBLE. IF WE KEEP THE WHEELS GREASED.

BUT WE'VE BEEN WANTING TO RECRUIT A BELIEVER. SOMEONE IN INTELLIGENCE. AND THEN YOU STUMBLED INTO OUR LITTLE PARTY.

NOW, SON, DO YOU **BELIEVE?**

I remember how terrible his breath was. That's what stuck in my mind.

The fortune from their Texas oil company had been funding right-wing politicians for the last two decades.

I remember thinking, how does a man worth billions of dollars have such terrible breath?

But that's not what I said. What I said was...

YES. I BELIEVE.

They took me into a little side room. Not much bigger than this. There were other people there. All men. All white. All dressed in suits...except...

There was a woman, dressed in red. She was wearing these sunglasses in the dark room, and it scared me. I don't know why it scared me so much...

I just knew she couldn't see wearing those things, and I got this pit in my stomach.

There was a film playing, in black and white, on an old projector.

As it played, the men in the room leaned in. There was this smell in the air. This...I don't know. It was like a smug musk.

It got worse when she SMILED at me.

Anticipation on the edge of orgasm.

Like we were watching something obscene and decadent.

It was the moon rover. The landing. The shot of Neil Armstrong descending the ladder, ready to make his one small step for man.

But there was something off about it. I couldn't put my finger on it at first, but I quickly realized.

The angle of the shot was all wrong. It was from a different vantage point. I was trying to figure out why when I saw something in the dark behind the lunar rover.

It was a man, holding a cardboard cup of coffee. No space helmet, no anything. Just this ordinary, tired-looking man on the moon.

The room erupted as they saw him. But I just broke out in a nervous sweat.

The Boulets said it was from Kubrick's private collection. That it'd been held in a government warehouse for the last few decades.

They talked about a plan to release it to the press, in due time. But that it would need to be coordinated with their BIGGER find.

That's when one of the brothers leaned in and asked me if I wanted to take a trip with them, and see how deep the rabbit hole went.

WHY DID YOU GO?

THE BOULETS FUND MOST OF THE CORNERS OF THE INTERNET I STUDY. THE EXTREMIST CORNERS. HONESTLY, I THOUGHT I WAS COMING IN AT THE GROUND FLOOR OF SOMETHING.

THEM TRYING TO CREATE THEIR OWN CONSPIRACY THEORY TO FEED THE TROLLS AND KEEP THEM AGITATED AND PLIABLE.

THAT'S NOT WHY. YOU WANTED TO SEE SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE OF ALL OF THIS BULLSHIT. BECAUSE IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE IT HAD BEEN DOCTORED...

AND IF THAT VIDEO WASN'T BULLSHIT, IT MEANT A WHOLE LOT ELSE YOU BELIEVE **IS** BULLSHIT.

OKAY, YEAH. THAT'S WHY.

AND I'D NEVER BEEN ON A PRIVATE PLANE BEFORE.

THEY SAID THEIR GOVERNMENT CONTACTS WERE COVERING FOR ME. BUT THEY WOULDN'T TELL ME WHERE THEY WERE GOING. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO SPOIL THE SURPRISE.

THE OTHER MEN, THEY DRANK THE WHOLE TIME. I MIGHT HAVE HAD A GLASS OR TWO, BUT MOSTLY I STARED OUT THE WINDOW...

YOU WANTED TO SEE THE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH, WITH YOUR OWN EYES. AND I'M SURE YOU DID, BUT THERE WAS THIS SENSE THAT MAYBE IT WAS JUST YOUR IMAGINATION.

YOU DIDN'T TRUST WHAT YOU WERE SEEING, DID YOU?

NO.

I DIDN'T.

I don't know how long the flight was...

It felt like days. And I don't know. It may have been. We stopped to refuel a few times.

I can't imagine what my husband was thinking.

The party was continuing, and you could just feel the stench of excitement in the air. The plane felt thick with it.

And I just sat, feeling sick in my seat. Time melted away. I felt... unmoored more than anything. Hungover from what I'd seen in that screening room.

I had dozed off, when a hand shook my shoulder.

COLE. YOU'RE MISSING IT. YOU'RE AT THE END OF EVERY-THING, AND YOU'RE MISSING THE DAMN SHOW.

LOOK OUT YOUR WINDOW, AND SEE WHAT THEY'VE BEEN HIDING FROM US, ALL THESE YEARS.

WHAT... WHERE ARE WE...?

WE'RE OFF THE EDGE OF THE MAP, BOY.

HERE THERE BE MONSTERS.

OH. OH, JESUS.

YES, PRAISE JESUS.

I NEED... I NEED TO...

MOVE. I NEED THE BATHROOM... I NEED.

DID YOU SEE?

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEE...

FUCKING HELL...

ALRIGHT, GENTS. WE'LL BE LANDING AT THE BASECAMP IN A MOMENT. FROM THERE WE CAN TAKE A HELICOPTER UP CLOSE.

WE STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THE TOP OF THE THING. WHERE IT MEETS THE SKY...BUT WE'LL TAKE YOU AS HIGH AS WE CAN GO.

SEATBELTS. THIS IS GOING TO BE BUMPY.

HK HUURK

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I'M SORRY, DEAR, BUT DO YOU WORK FOR US?

DOES SHE **LOOK** LIKE SHE WORKS FOR US, BERTIE?

WHO SENT YOU? ARE YOU FROM BLACK HAT?

NOPE.

COLE TURNER?

Y-YES.

SPECIAL AGENT COLE TURNER?

YES.

I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME.

THAT'S ALL I KNOW. YOU CAN KILL ME NOW.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO FUCKING KILL YOU. CALM DOWN.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, RUBY?

HE'S FINE.

YEAH?

YEAH. HE'LL DO. HE'S IN SHOCK, BUT HE KEPT ALL THE IMPORTANT DETAILS.

I COULD USE SOMEONE A BIT MORE PLUGGED IN TO THE MOMENT. NOT ANOTHER COLD WAR UFO HUNTER WITH A TINFOIL HAT.

AND YOU KNOW HIS HISTORY. WHAT HE WAS A PART OF IN THE '80S.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WE'RE **POACHING** YOU. YOU'VE BEEN POACHED. YOU DON'T WORK FOR THE FBI ANYMORE. YOU WORK FOR US.

I DON'T...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

SON, THE WORLD IS ROUND.

IT GOES AROUND THE SUN. GET ME A BIG LASER POINTER AND A FEW METER STICKS AND I CAN PROVE IT TO YOU.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE TRUTH BECAUSE OF SCIENCE.

YOU'RE SAYING IT WAS A KIND OF TULPA...SPACE?

THAT'S THE **TRUTH.**

WHAT YOU SAW THERE, AT THE END OF THE WORLD, WAS A SLIVER OF ANOTHER KIND OF TRUTH TAKING HOLD.

WHEN THE FUCK DID THE WHOLE FUCKING WORLD GO BUDDHIST?

YOU'RE ALL GOING TO BE SHAVING YOUR HEAD AND SINGING TO ME WITH THIS HIPPY BULLSHIT...

THAT'S HARE KRISHNA.

I'M BEING FUNNY.

YOU'RE BEING HORRIBLE.

A TULPA IS A THOUGHTFORM... A BELIEF GIVEN A BODY.

I KNOW WHAT A FUCKING TULPA IS, COLE. JESUS. AND YOU'RE PART-RIGHT. YOU'RE JUST MISSING THE SCALE OF THE THING.

I'M GOING TO TELL YOU THE SECRET. THE BIG SECRET THAT YOU'VE KNOWN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

THE MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, THE MORE TRUE THAT THING BECOMES. THE MORE REALITY TIPS IN THE FAVOR OF THAT BELIEF.

WHAT HAPPENED IN ANTARCTICA WAS THAT A GROUP OF MEN MANAGED TO MAKE ENOUGH PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH OF A FLAT EARTH FOR IT TO MANIFEST IN REALITY.

IF THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO BRING PROOF OF THAT BACK TO AMERICA, AND SPREAD IT...

THE WORLD WOULD CHANGE.

THE MOON LANDING WOULD BE A HOAX. EVERY GOVERNMENT, EVERY AIRLINE, EVERY COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION, THEY WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN IN ON IT FROM THE BEGINNING.

RETROACTIVELY, THE EARTH WOULD **ALWAYS** HAVE BEEN FLAT. AND THE PEOPLE WOULD RIGHTLY RISE UP IN FURY, HAVING BEEN LIED TO BY **EVERYONE** FOR **DECADES.**

THAT IS WHY THIS ORGANIZATION EXISTS. WE HAVE SPENT THE LAST CENTURY MAKING SURE THAT CONSPIRACY THEORIES **STAY** CONSPIRACY THEORIES.

AND NOW YOU GET TO BE A PART OF IT. LUCKY YOU.

RUBY HERE WILL GET YOU SORTED. YOU ANSWER TO HER NOW.

WAIT...I HAVE QUESTIONS.

I WOULDN'T WANT YOU IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE QUESTIONS. THERE WILL BE TIME FOR ALL THAT.

WHO WAS THE WOMAN IN RED WITH NO EYES? WHY DID THEY THINK RUBY WORKED FOR SOME-THING CALLED BLACK HAT?

SON, YOU KNOW DAMN WELL EACH OF THOSE QUESTIONS WILL LEAD TO MORE QUESTIONS, AND MORE QUESTIONS AFTER THAT.

AT LEAST WAIT UNTIL WE'RE PAYING YOU, FOR GOD'S SAKE.

LOOK, I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THE HELL YOU PEOPLE ARE...

HEH, I GUESS I SKIPPED THAT PART, DIDN'T I?

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MY NAME IS LEE HARVEY OSWALD.
WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

NEXT month

SATANIC PANIC

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RATED M / MATURE

ISSUE ONE

ZONE